Report of the Accreditation Visiting Team

Rich Middle School 54 East 100 South Laketown, Utah 84038

September 22, 2004



Utah State Office of Education

250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Rich Middle School 54 East 100 South Laketown, UT 84038

September 22, 2004

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, September 22, 2004, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Rich Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Kip Motta is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Rich Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Rich Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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RICH MIDDLE SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Kip Motta Delora Wight			
Counseling			
Scott Ferguson			
Support Staff			
Kathryn Webb. Kris Batty. Doreen Nielson. Lois Esterholdt. Charlotte Johnson.	Aide		
Sharon Pugmire			
Faculty			
Craig Floyd	TLC Health Crafts		
Justin Groll			
Karen Matthews			
JoDee Muir	History		
Travis Muirbrook			
Jacilyn Norris			
Jan Robinson	· ·		
Delora Wight	O , 1		

RICH MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Rich Middle School is to prepare our students academically and socially for success in their future endeavors.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- All students can learn.
- All stakeholders are responsible for providing a quality learning environment for our students.
- It is the responsibility of the teachers, staff, and administration to provide a variety of learning activities to accommodate individual learning styles.
- Learning is a lifelong endeavor.
- Evaluations of assessments, goals, and high expectations should be the guiding forces in the development of curriculum and instructional practices.
- All educational decisions should be made in the best interest of all students.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. Ralph P. Vander Heide, Utah State Office of Education, Accreditation Consultant, Visiting Team Chairperson

Judith H. Vander Heide, Accreditation Consultant

Bryce Passey, Mount Logan Middle School, Logan City School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

RICH MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Rich Middle School is the only middle school (grades 6-8) in rural Rich School District. The school's present enrollment is 113, down from 132 in 2003-04. The school, located in Laketown in Rich County, Utah, is classified as "a necessarily existing small school" in rural northeastern Utah. Students come from as far away as the Wyoming border on the south and the Idaho border to the north, both of which border on Rich County. Some students are bused for one hour to and from school. There are six full-time and three part-time licensed teachers. The school library media specialist works under the supervision of a certified librarian. There is one licensed special education instructor who supervises two classified aides.

In profiling Rich Middle School, a systematic process of collecting and managing data was employed which gives a comprehensive description of this small school and clearly describes its strengths and areas that need improvement. Disaggregation of the data has been or is being completed. The analysis includes comparisons to other schools and to state and national statistics, and it guides the school improvement planning process.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of their profile?

The analysis was comprehensive and well done. The data compiled by the USU Center for the Schools of the Future gives a very good overview of the survey data. The self-study gives extensive and detailed information on each curricular area; therefore, findings were extensive in all aspects of the profile.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

The inclusion of specific information about teachers (such as schools attended, degrees held, number of years teaching etc.) would have been helpful. The members of the Visiting Team commend the school for having compiled and disaggregated a large amount of data concerning this small school. The Visiting Team recommends, however, that the text of future self-studies be condensed to include only the most significant data that reveals an accurate profile of the school.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

The Visiting Team has no recommendations. Data collection was comprehensive (see above).

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

The school has engaged very actively in this process. The self-study has been conducted over a period of three years. Rich Middle School used Indicators of School Quality (ISQ) to measure stakeholders' opinions regarding the quality of the school for the purpose of improving learning. Seven areas of school quality were surveyed: Teacher Quality, Administration, Parents' Support, Instructional Quality, Student Commitment, Resource Accessibility, and Safety.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The self-study appears to accurately portray the "big picture" at Rich Middle School.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The school's self-study states, "The community council determined that the goals for student outcomes be centered around three specific goals." These goals (desired results for student learning, or DRSLs) are as follows:

- Students' attitude toward learning
- Students' communication
- Students' performance on state CRT tests

Several specific indicators are listed for improving the performance of all students in each of these areas across the curriculum, and a description is given of the students' current level of achievement.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?

Stakeholders have worked collaboratively for some three years to build a shared vision.

b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?

The beliefs and mission align with the mission of the school district. Belief statements are clearly stated and free of jargon. It appears that recommendations and suggestions of all stakeholders were taken into account in the development of the beliefs and mission, and that faculty, administration, and other stakeholders are committed to supporting the success of students as reflected in the beliefs and mission.

The mission statement is clear, concise, and precise. It describes a compelling direction for the school. However, the Visiting Team suggests that the mission statement could be somewhat broader. The team notes, for example, that there is no mention of lifelong learning, to which all stakeholders with whom the Visiting Team spoke expressed commitment, and which is mentioned in one of the belief statements. Certainly the mission statement reflects student learning as a top priority (i.e., preparing students "academically" and "socially"), which should be the essential element of a school's mission.

c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?

Stakeholders appear to understand the school self-study process and have assured that these items are aligned.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The administration and faculty are keenly aware of Utah Core requirements and work cooperatively to meet or exceed those requirements. The staff has worked collaboratively in developing a comprehensive plan that supports the effective implementation of the curriculum. This plan facilitates the alignment of teaching

practices, instructional support and resources, and assessments of student learning with the curriculum

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The coordination and articulation of the curriculum leads to a shared vision for student learning, as evidenced by the DRSLs that were developed by stakeholders.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?
 - Instruction includes frequent and timely assessments of students' learning progress and feedback that informs both teachers and students when and if additional time or alternative learning strategies are needed to improve student learning.
- b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?
 - Adjustments or modifications to the instructional process are made, and alternative strategies and learning activities are provided, based on the review of assessment data.
- c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?
 - The school provides opportunities for students to improve and enrich their learning through expanded uses of time, facilities, and instructional resources.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

The development of assessments of student learning is based on a clear definition of the type of achievement to be assessed and the performance standards for evaluating the quality of students' achievement. The emphasis given to the Six Traits of Writing in all courses is an exemplary schoolwide assessment model.

- The staff has created rubrics to aid in maintaining consistency across the curriculum in teaching the Six Traits.
- b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?
 - The selection of the method of assessing student learning is based on the type of learning to be assessed, the specific performance standards for evaluating student achievement, and the purpose of the assessment.
- c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?
 - Performance standards and criteria for judging student performance are established and shared with students in advance of the assessment, and are consistently applied on an equitable basis.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?
 - The school is effectively establishing a collaborative process of shared responsibility. The leadership of Rich Middle School has shown great vision and commitment to the future of this school community.
- b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?
 - Most decisions made at Rich Middle School appear to be aligned with the school's beliefs, mission, and goals. Decisions made by the school appear to be made according to validated, research-based practices and the analysis of pertinent data and information. Stakeholders are involved in decision making. One example of the inclusion of stakeholders is consultation with the community council.
- c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?
 - Rich Middle School actively monitors students' progress in achieving the essential knowledge and skills for their learning. The school uses assessment and evaluation data to improve student learning and instructional effectiveness.

- d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?
 - Most of the schoolwide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's beliefs and mission, and are designed to maximize opportunities for successful learning. The school leadership has worked to organize the school for the success of students and staff in achieving their goals.
- e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?
 - The allocation of resources (e.g., human resources, time as a resource for learning, physical resources, instructional resources, financial resources) is aligned with the school's goals. Teachers expressed gratitude for the efforts of the principal to distribute funds equitably for overall school improvement. It was noted also that the principal energetically seeks funding for the school in addition to the money allocated by the school district. Such additional funding is used to augment the curriculum.
- f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?
 - The school is effectively establishing a collaborative process of shared responsibility. The leadership of Rich Middle School has shown great vision and commitment to the future of this school community.

Community Building:

- a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?
 - Positive and productive working relationships are established among students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. There is strong evidence of the effectiveness of the work of the school's stakeholders as a learning community.
- b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?
 - The school's dedication to creating and supporting a learning environment for students that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging is evident in every facet of the work of the school.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?
 - The school's organizational system and culture stress the commitment to continuous improvement and provide strong support for school improvement and professional development.
- b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

The school provides comprehensive and ongoing support for the work of individuals and groups responsible for implementing school improvement initiatives.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Rich Middle School is seeking accreditation by the State of Utah only. Therefore, a report on the specific standards of NAAS is not covered here. However, the Visiting Team observes that Rich Middle School meets the NAAS standards with minor deviations, and encourages the school to apply for NAAS accreditation.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

The action plan (School Improvement Plan) is built around the DRSLs and adequately addresses the critical areas for follow-up. The selection of goals for school improvement is based on the school's priorities for improving students' learning and for improving the instructional and organizational effectiveness of the school. The goals are measurable, sufficiently challenging, and attainable within the given timeframes. However, the Visiting Team recommends that those timelines be revisited, since some of the goals are already accomplished and others could be better spaced (that is, the school could perhaps use more time for achievement of some aspects of a given goal). The SIP is aligned with the profile,

- beliefs, mission, DRSLs, and the analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness. The assignment of accountability responsibilities is clear.
- b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?
 - There appears to be commitment to the SIP from all stakeholders. Certainly all staff members are involved in implementing the plan. A plan is in place for documenting evidence of the extent of achievement of the target goals.
- c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?
 - Follow-up processes for monitoring are well thought out. The Visiting Team notes that, based on the analysis of performance data, adjustment will be made as needed to help the school more successfully achieve the target goals.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for their display of hospitality and assistance, and for their openness and frankness about Rich Middle School. An ethos of continual improvement is being nurtured at Rich Middle School.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty and administration for fostering a nurturing, helpful, and safe atmosphere, and for evidencing an "accepting attitude." The Visiting Team notes that students were highly complimentary of teachers concerning extra help and "going the extra mile."
- The Visiting Team commends all persons who worked together for three years to produce the self-study.
- The Visiting Team commends the principal for his strong, positive leadership and comprehension of the SIP process.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty for working cooperatively and sharing. This was both reported by stakeholders and observed by the Visiting Team.
- The Visiting Team commends the teachers for incorporating the school's DRSLs into their course-specific objectives.

- The Visiting Team commends the administration and board for hiring a part-time guidance counselor.
- The Visiting Team commends the entire faculty for incorporating the Six Traits of Writing into their courses.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty and students for their high level of proficiency with technology.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to improve communication with parents and all stakeholders.
- The Visiting Team recommends that appropriate personnel improve the website in order to disseminate more comprehensive information to parents.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the administration pay heed to concerns about crowding on school buses.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the administration and faculty continue to explore ways to increase enrichment of the curriculum in art and foreign language classes. (The Visiting Team observes that this is already being done to some extent—with theater and band classes, for example.)
- The Visiting Team recommends that the administration continue to monitor the licensing of teachers to assure that they have appropriate credentials in all of the areas in which they teach. (The Visiting Team observes that this is being done, but also recognizes that licensing requirements are becoming more stringent.)

SUMMARY

Rich Middle School has made a commendable beginning toward institutionalizing the process of reflective inquiry, which should lead to the school being internally responsible for the creation and maintenance of high standards. Stakeholders, including the Board of Education, appear to sincerely believe that the improvement of teaching and learning must be an intentional and ongoing process.